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THE
CONVERT INSTRUCTED
IN THE
ORIGIN, SIGNIFICATION, AND ADVANTAGES

OF
BAPTISM.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,
AN
ADDRESS
ON THE
IMPROVEMENT OF BAPTISM,

Delivered to the Church preparatory to Communion

AT THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

By JOHN STANFORD, M. A.

These are they which follow the LAMB whithersoever he goeth.
REV.

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THE
CONVERT INSTRUCTED, &c.

THAT the Eternal God, through the death of his Son, the communications of his Spirit, and the preaching of his Gospel, hath provided a salvation worthy his attributes, commensurate with human misery, and sufficient to produce the purest holiness and happiness, is a sentiment sufficient to defy the rage of infidelity, and confirm revelation to be a system *worthy of all acceptance*. That heart which is enriched with the grace of the gospel, and is brought to the feet of Jesus for pardon, and obtains peace with God, through the blood of the cross, makes an unreserved surrender of itself to be the Lord's forever; and, as ardently thirsts after the paths of obedience as the over-driven heart pants for the cooling stream. One of the first public duties enjoined by Christ on those who are thus called by his grace, is, a submission to his will by water baptism.

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baptism. And, as a right perception of the nature and intention of the duty, with the possession of principles congenial with the command, is essential to acceptable, pleasurable obedience; it is the intention of this treatise, in submission to the benediction of Christ, to assist the christian convert to obtain a more competent knowledge of the origin, significancy and advantages of baptism; that thus, when called to obey, he may enjoy the pleasures of the institution, and go on in his way rejoicing.

THE ORIGIN OF BAPTISM.

IT requires but a small degree of attention to perceive that water baptism does not arise from the precepts of nature. Nature knows nothing of such a command, nor is she competent to ascertain, either the significancy or the intention of it. To immerse in water, either to cleanse, or to refresh the body, is indeed natural; but that by plunging into water, and rising again by the hand of another, as a religious service, acceptable to God,

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is far remote from Nature's comprehension.*
As baptism is therefore not ordained by the

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law

* As almost every learned pædobaptist writer has acknowledged that the primitive meaning of the word *baptize* is to immerse, and that the ordinance in the apostolic age was administered by dipping the subject in water, and by which mode alone the significancy of the institution is preserved; those who have taken leave to deviate from the primitive order, to accommodate persons, governments, or climates, will excuse the Author if he disowns any other mode of baptism than that of immersion. For a full explanation of the word, and the sentiments of the learned pædobaptist writers upon it, the reader is referred to Booth's *Pædobaptism Examined*, vol. i. chap. 2. For the information of those who are incompetent in the Greek language, I will transcribe an observation of the learned Mr. Robinson: "It is sufficient to observe, that the word (*baptize*) is confessedly *Greek*, that native Greeks must understand their own language better than foreigners, and that they have always baptized, and do yet baptize, by immersion. This is an authority for the meaning of the word infinitely preferable to that of European lexicographers; so that a man who is obliged to trust human testimony, and who baptizes by immersion because the Greeks do, understands a Greek word exactly as the Greeks themselves understand it; and in this case the Greeks are unexceptionable guides, and their practice is in this instance safe ground of action." *Robinson's History of Baptism*, p. 5, 6.

law of nature, we must search for it in the volume of revelation. In the Old Testament we have no information of an institution of this kind by the God of Israel. The Jews had a baptism introduced by tradition, and is to be found in the writings of the *Yad Chazaka* of Maimonides, a celebrated Jewish writer, who, in the beginning of the twelfth century, was head of a famous school in Egypt. But the New Testament affords us full information upon the subject. *There was a man sent from God whose name was John.* The mission of this extraordinary person was to preach and to baptize. And so far from his baptism being a part of the Jewish ritual, he acknowledges that he received his instruction immediately from God.* John continued preaching the kingdom of heaven, baptizing all who came to him confessing their sins. Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized. From a conviction of the glory of Christ, the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Baptist declined the administration, saying, I have need to be baptized of *thee*, and comest thou to me? But Jesus said unto him, suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil

* John i. 33.

fulfil all righteousness. John immediately baptized him; and when he came up out of the water the heavens were opened; the spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighting upon him, while a voice from above proclaimed, **THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.** Mat. 3. Jesus now commenced his public ministry, and commissioned many of his disciples to teach and to baptize in his name. Thus we learn that baptism was instituted first by the will and authority of the Father, communicated to John, and afterwards by Christ, to be performed by his disciples to the end of the world. Mark xvi. 15, 16.

Dr. Sherlock says, “ what is matter of institution depends wholly upon the Divine will and pleasure; and though all men will grant that God and Christ have always great reason for their institution, yet it is not the reason, but the authority, which makes the institution.”* But since baptism is not founded in the original constitution of nature, it is a question worth enquiry, how this new institution was introduced? For although it be granted that God’s will is the essence of an institution,

* Preserv. against Popery, title 9. p. 419.

institution, yet in the divine œconomy he cannot err; a system of nature has already been provided for man on his creation; nor can we suppose such system capable of alteration or addition, without grossly impeaching the wisdom and goodness of the divine Legislator. Baptism, therefore, is appointed by God in a new relation, for a different administration, and for subjects of another state. All gospel appointments are made by God as the GOD OF ALL GRACE, who, by the power of his Spirit, *translates* guilty men out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear Son: and also by Jesus, as KING IN ZION, whose office it is to reveal such laws as are calculated to preserve the honour and happiness of his spiritual kingdom. Jesus said, “ *My kingdom is not of this world;*” it is not of the system of nature; nor is it of carnal policy; but, composed of subjects created new creatures in Christ Jesus, and who need a new law congenial with their new state of spiritual existence, and by which they may express their obedience to their Lord and King. Now Baptism is one of those laws, and binding only upon the subjects of grace; therefore it was that John, Philip, and all the primitive administrators of the ordinance, required faith
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and repentance in those who came to be baptized.* When Jesus came to John to be baptized of him, he said, “ *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;*” by which he could neither mean the righteousness of the moral, nor of the ceremonial law, as neither of them required obedience by baptism; but that gospel righteousness peculiar to the dispensation of grace; and thus Christ, as leader of his people, has set them an example that they should follow his steps.

It is presumed that the Christian, thus tracing the origin of baptism, and viewing it as an institution peculiar to the kingdom of grace, will not only find, that an obedience to God therein is closely connected with his hope in a Saviour's blood, but it will lead him, in holy admiration of the glory of Jehovah, in the rich displays of his love among his people, and thus, when called to obey, he will enjoy the higher satisfaction. Being a subject of grace, the voice of this appointment of grace will powerfully penetrate his heart, and prompt him to obedience. Nor will he listen with attention to the cavils of men, or confide in any sort of baptism he may have passed through in his
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* Mat. iii. Acts viii. 37.

state of infancy or unregeneracy ; for, being brought by grace into the kingdom of Christ, he can enjoy no pleasure in obedience but that which he knows is commanded by his King, and peculiar to his *new* and happy state.

As we cannot profit by any duty, considered as a means of grace, unless we are assisted to understand its nature and design, I shall now proceed to attempt the instruction of the Christian Convert in the Significancy of Baptism. If baptism be an appointment of God, for the obedience of those who obtain mercy to believe, it certainly must have an expressive meaning---be calculated to display the wisdom of its Divine Institutor, and conduct the believer into greater admiration of the realities of redeeming grace. May that blessed Spirit who was promised to the disciples to guide them into all truth, vouchsafe to lead us by his word in our present enquiry, and fill our hearts with sacred joy..

THE SIGNIFICANCY OF BAPTISM.

I. IT is a mirror in which are strikingly represented the Sufferings, Death, and Resurrection of the Son of God; by which alone sinners are saved from plunging into the waters of divine vengeance. When Jesus drew near to the period when all things that were written in the psalms and in the prophets concerning his sufferings and death were to be accomplished, with magnanimity of soul he said unto his disciples, “ *I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!*”* And how strikingly were these sorrows anticipated as a baptism? Water is a well known scripture emblem of distress; ---a plunging into water, for the moment, depriving us of light, and sequestering us from the world; and its frequently being an instrument of suffocation and death, present us a lively representation of the extreme sufferings and dreadful death of Jesus, our adored Saviour. And, as the learned WITSIUS says, “ The continuing, how short soever, under the water, represents his burial, and the lowest

* Luke xii. 50.

lowest state of his humiliation, when he was thought to be wholly cut off, while in the grave that was both sealed and guarded. The *emergence*, or coming out of the water, gives us some resemblance of his resurrection or victory, obtained in his death over Death, which he vanquished within its inmost recesses. All these particulars the apostle intimates, Rom. vi. 3, 4."* And, I may add, these great things of Christ were prophetically described by David, Psa. lxxix. 2. "*I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*"

Come, then, ye sons of grace, anxious to obey your Lord in baptism---come see the place where your Lord lay! Behold how cheerfully with John he descended Jordan's bank, and bowed beneath the rolling wave, and thus realized to himself his future, bitter death. How strong his love! not the flight of passion, or of instant zeal; steady and resolved he urged his way through life, endured the pains and penalties of death, and then arose triumphant from the grave. Was Jesus thus baptized? Did that depict his future sufferings,

* Witflus on Baptism, see 26.

sufferings, death and resurrection? Be assured it was not for himself, but for his church, whom he loved and came to redeem. His people were baptized with him into his death, that with him, as their glorious head, they might enjoy everlasting life. They were *buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so they also should walk in newness of life*, and bring forth fruit in rich abundance to the glory of his grace. Through the baptism of Christ into the water see your iniquities washed away by his bloody death; by his emerging and returning from the waves, see your justification complete in him, and your title to happiness secured; for “ *He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*” * This, my fellow sinner, is the source from whence alone our peace can flow; this is the rock on which, with safety, we can build; and this shall be our song through this dreary vale of tears. These great truths being realized to our believing minds in the ordinance of baptism, what a glory rests upon the institution! How happy those, who, from a sense of personal interest

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* Rom. iv. 25.

in the rich salvation of Jesus, stand ready to obey his great command! Jesus was baptized in water, in sorrow, in blood, in wrath, in death, to rescue you from endless woe; you are to be baptized in water only, as a public declaration of your faith in him, and to prove your affectionate obedience to his will.

II. The next subject expressed by baptism, is the Regeneration of a sinner's heart. I prefer introducing this view of the institution immediately after an explanation of it, as descriptive of the sufferings of Christ; because the satisfaction of Christ is the foundation of our regeneration. If Jesus had not reconciled us to God by his vicarious death on the cross, the spirit of God, in justice, could not have regenerated and reconciled the sinner's heart to his offended Lord. Paul, in his letter to Titus, iii. 5, evidently considered water-baptism an emblem of a sinner's regeneration; "*According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*"* Paul surely could not mean, that by a man's body being immersed in water to the

* "Washing us by *regeneration*, as in a laver, the pledge and sign of which is in baptism." *Pool on the text.*

the washing away the filth of the body, that the *soul* thereby was regenerated and cleansed from its sinful pollutions. Job, from a conviction of the guilt of his nature, said, “ *If I wash myself in snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.*”

Job. ix. 30, 31. Alas! a person may be sprinkled with water in infancy, or immersed at riper age, but it will avail him nothing while his heart remains unchanged. The leprosy lies deep within the soul, and defies the purest waters of nature to cleanse. Simon Magus was baptized by an apostle, but his soul was not a whit the cleaner, and remained in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. If baptism, in any form, administered at any period of our lives, be *regeneration*, it supercedes the grace of God. If by water-baptism I have been regenerated, made a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, I am safe; there is no need of my being born again of the Spirit. What a delusive snare has this been, and still is, to thousands! They drag on a sinful, miserable ex-

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istence,

istence, supposing, by their baptism, they are in the way to bliss, while their conduct and state are such, according to Christ's own words, that "*they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"* However, therefore, persons may wish to be baptized, merely to assume a public profession of religion, they should be informed, that "works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace; but they have the nature of sin."† None but the sons of grace can extract the sweets of the means of grace.

If it be replied, "Did not Peter exhort the thousands that were pricked in the heart, under his sermon, *to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins?*"‡ and did not Ananias say unto Paul, "*Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus.*"§ we reply, in neither of these cases, did the converts expect to be cleansed from their guilt by the simple washing of water. They

* Matt. xviii. 2, 3.

† 13 Article of Episcopal Church.

‡ Acts ii. 38.

§ Acts xxii. 16.

They had previously been directed to behold a crucified Saviour, through whom alone pardon could flow to their guilty breasts. And, it is equally evident, regenerating grace had already reached their hearts, else the Jews had never cried for salvation through him, whom, with wicked hands, they had slain; nor Paul have stopped in his persecuting rage against the church of Christ. But they were commanded to be baptized for the remission of sins; because that ordinance realized the death of Christ, by whom forgiveness came; was an institution by which Jesus would manifest to them his pardoning love, and by which they were to commence a public profession of their Lord and Saviour. Not water, but the bleeding heart of Christ, is the fountain opened to wash away sin; and the spirit of God is the efficient cause of the sinner's spiritual life.*

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* The Germans call baptism *tauff*, from *deith*, which they call *tieff*, in their language; as if it were proper those should be *deeply immersed*, who are baptized. And, truly, if you consider what baptism signifies, you shall see the same thing required: for it signifies that the old man and our nativity, that is full of sins, which is entirely of flesh and blood, may be overwhelmed by divine grace. The

Most mistakes on this subject have originated from taking water for the spirit ; the sign for the thing signified. God, in condescension to our capacities, has made use of sensible objects to explain the great subjects of our faith. Invisible and spiritual things are brought down to our understanding by those which are visible and material. I will therefore attempt to shew the fitness of water-baptism to represent the regeneration of a sinner's heart.

The element, *water*, having a natural quality to cleanse the the filth of the body, sufficiently represents the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, to purify the soul.* *Water* is the most penetrative of all bodies, except fire ; and is the most difficult to consume ; and is therefore expressive of the irresistible grace of the Spirit in penetrating the inward recesses of the heart, to produce its renovation, which can never finally be destroyed. Water is the principle of many living things, and in their creation, the spirit brooded upon the waters. The
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manner of baptism, therefore, should correspond to the signification of baptism, that it may show a certain and plain sign of it. *Luther in Dr. Du Veil on Acts viii. 38.*

* John iii. 5.

very generation of the human foetus is said to be by water. Between the first and second creation, there is a striking analogy. The spirit of Christ, as the mystical water, is the principle of regeneration and spiritual life, and by which we are brought into sensible union with God, as our eternal portion. In some countries baptism has been performed in fonts, or baptistries; in others, in rivers.---The latter, when conveniently to be attained, to me is most expressive of the living, animating influences of the Spirit, and nearest resembles the baptism of our Lord in Jordan's-stream.

The *Universality* of regeneration is likewise represented by the whole body, and not a part only, being baptized in water. It is not the head, the understanding, nor a single faculty of the soul, which is renewed to the exemption of the rest: but the whole inward man, mind, will, and affections, which undergo an equal renovation; so that the subject becomes *a new creature in Christ Jesus*.

Nor is our obedience to God in baptism *once* only to be performed in the course of the christian life;---and that also by *once* dipping, the least expressive sign in that ordinance of our regeneration. The regeneration of a sinner's heart

heart is *one* instantaneous work of God. Although a man may have many changes in his natural life, he has but *one* birth; and although the christian, like Peter, may need many conversions, and frequent restoring, sanctifying mercies from God, yet he has only *one* spiritual birth. In this we perceive the difference between baptism and the Lord's supper. Baptism, as a sign of our *regeneration*, is *once* and forever; the Lord's supper is the emblem and means of our personal *sanctification*, which is progressive, and therefore *often* to be received.

III. In baptism the christian is directed to contemplate and adore the HOLY TRINITY, as his COVENANT GOD. When the risen Saviour gave his last orders to his disciples to go forth and preach the gospel to all nations, he enjoined them to baptize “ *In the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.*”* The order of these sacred names, to be pronounced on the administration of baptism, could not have been without express design; and upon which I will beg leave to make the following remarks.

Baptism was to be administered in the name of the trinity, because the institution itself is

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* Matt. xxviii. 19.

so very expressive of the nature and excellence of that salvation which is the result of JEHOVAH's counsel; and in the execution of which each adored person assumed his own relation to his people, and performed his separate engagements; therefore baptism is called *the counsel of God*.*

As it is a God in TRINITY and in UNITY who is the christian's God, he, in baptism, owns that God as such. This God is the grand subject of revelation, whom nature neither knew, nor reveals. I cannot better express myself on this sublime truth, than in the words of the evangelical Mr. Romaine. "FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT; these three exist in one JEHOVAH. They took those names, not to describe their manner of existing, but their manner of acting; not what they are in themselves, but how they stand related to us in the œconomy of redemption: for the eternal Three entered into covenant before all worlds, and agreed to sustain certain covenant offices, and assume names descriptive of their offices. Father is the title of that divine person who gave an innumerable company of sinners to his son, upon condition that he
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* Luke vii. 30.

would be manifested in the flesh, and would become their surety, to work out for them a righteousness in his life, and to make an atonement for them by his death, and then he would be his father, and their father. A co-equal, and co-eternal person accepted the condition, and covenanted to be made man, and to live, and die for the many sons whom he was to bring to glory; therefore he took the name of Son, Son of God, Son of man, &c. Another co-equal, co-eternal person covenanted to breathe life into them, to be to them the Spirit, or breath of life, that they might be regenerate from a death in trespasses and sins, and be made the children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; therefore he is called throughout the scriptures, *the Spirit.*”* The doctrine of the trinity, however derided by those who disesteem revelation, is confirmed in the *experience* of those who have received the grace of God in truth. “*Through Christ they have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*”† They find no other way to enjoy peace and communion with God; no other way in which the attributes of God shine

* Romaine's Walk of Faith. vol. i. p. 21.

† Eph. ii. 18.

shine in pardoning sin ; therefore they rejoice in being baptized in the name of the TRINITY, to express their union, and experience of their salvation.

As there was an august display of the TRINITY at the baptism of Jesus, so the ordinance is to be administered in the name of the *Father*, *the Son*, and *the Spirit*. John received his commission to baptize from the Father. Jesus was obedient to the Father in that ordinance, as the Head of his Church, as necessary to his public ministry ; and to leave his people an example to follow his steps. The Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the Father, in glorious accents, proclaimed him *his beloved Son*. Therefore, as this memorable event was the public introduction of the gospel, the same God bears testimony to the same ordinance, whenever and wherever duly administered to gospel converts.

Nor was this positive order to be observed without its use and influence on those ministers who were appointed to administer it. By this they might know the God by whom they were commissioned ; and that through their ministry, and under the Spirit's influence, the knowledge of this JEHOVAH should be perpetuated

petuated from age to age. Happy is that servant who realizes the source of his mission, and is found faithful in declaring the whole counsel of God!

I venture once more to add, that the *body* of water into which a believer is baptized, in the name of the TRINITY, is expressive of the *unity* of the divine ESSENCE; and that by *once* dipping is our testimony of belief in that truth. If the *Son*, or the *Holy Ghost*, be inferior to the *Father*, one great significance of the institution is removed, and those, who either administer it, or submit to it, are, in my estimation, exposed to the charge of idolatry.

IV. As the duty of baptism is enjoined on persons, immediately on their conversion to God, the christian convert may, in this institution, realize the nature of his *experience*, and the public *profession* he is solicitous to assume.

That degree of *experience* necessary to a subject for baptism, is a conviction of guilt which merits the wrath of God, and a lively faith in the person and merits of Jesus Christ; these were demanded by the first preachers of the gospel, of all who desired to be baptized. *Repentance* was required by John for his baptism.

tism.* Christ commissioned his disciples to go and teach all nations, and those that *believed* were to be baptized.† When the multitude, who were pricked in the heart, enquired what they should do to be saved; Peter said unto them, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.* Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized.‡ Philip preached Christ, and the things concerning the kingdom of God, to the people of Samaria; and they *believed*, and were *baptized*, both men and women.§ Paul was baptized after God called him by his grace, and assured him that he was a chosen vessel.|| The Eunuch of Candace was baptized on a profession of his faith in Christ as the Son of God, and went on his way rejoicing.¶ Lydia's heart being opened of the Lord, she attended to the things which were spoken by the apostles, and was baptized.** The jailor, likewise, with all his

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* Mat. iii. 6, 8.

† Mark xvi. 15, 16.

‡ Acts ii. 38—44.

§ Acts viii. 12.

|| Acts ix.

¶ Acts viii. 26, &c.

** Acts xvi. 14, 15.

house, through a remarkable display of Almighty power, obtained mercy to *believe*, and were *baptized*.* From these instances produced from the scripture, it is very obvious, that the subjects for primitive baptism were those, who *believed, repented, received the word of life, and rejoiced in God*; and, as no man is at liberty to change the command of the Lord, neither can he, without sin, presume to alter the subjects enjoined to obey. The ordinance of baptism, being a spiritual institution; you may perceive from the scriptures cited that none but spiritual subjects were capable of enjoying the advantages it was designed to convey; and none but such were received by the apostles. It is necessary however for me to add, that in no instances of scripture baptism were there objections to *youth*, provided they had been taught of God. Nor was a wicked life, such as the jailor's, or the sinners at Jerusalem, who had ignorantly crucified the Lord of Glory, an exclusion from baptism, since there were evident demonstrations of conversion to God. Much less did the apostles require and extensive variety of *gifts*, or long standing in experimental grace; neither of these

* Acts xvi. 25—33.

these were essential pre-requisites to baptism ; for those who by any means had delayed their baptism, until a considerable age in the christian life, yet when baptized, they could be baptized only as *converts* to Christ. In the possession of grace, the *babe* in Christ is as much entitled to baptism, as the venerable *father* who may have known Christ forty years. If the person who now reads this can appeal to God, that grace hath made a change in his conscience*---justifies God in his condemnation as a sinner†---flies on the wings of faith and love to Christ for refuge, as the only hope set before him in the gospel‡---and is anxious to testify his obedience and gratitude to Jesus by being baptized ; §---if God hath done these great things for you, it is enough to entitle you to the sacred institution ; and I may confidently address you in the language of Ananias to Paul, “ *And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*”

The convert advancing to the water of bap-

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tism,

* Eph. v. 8.

† Psa. cxliii. 2. Psa. cxxx. 3.

‡ Heb. vi. 16—20.

§ John xiv. 15.

tism, as expressive of his salvation, thus discloses the emotion of his soul---“ *This water into which I most cheerfully descend, brings to my recollection that abyss of woe, into which, by sin, I was heedlessly plunging my immortal soul. But grace unmerited, almighty grace prevented; and I stopped in my flight, and directed to a Saviour’s arms. Yes, my Saviour Jesus, who plunged beneath the waves of vengeance, to rescue guilty me! He was baptized in suffering, in blood, in wrath, in death, that I might be brought near to a reconciled God. Let my heart now charge itself, with swift obedience, to perform his holy will. With Paul, and those whom grace inclined, I will now testify my hope in Christ, be baptized into his death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so I also may walk in newness of life, and no more pursue the delusive paths of folly. Thou King of Zion, in this thine own appointed way, bear testimony to my heart, and fill me with thy love. By thy blood and merits, save me from the guilt and power of sin. Shield me in the day of trial, and let me prove a faithful soldier of the cross. Into thine hand I now commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth; and let me be forever thine!*” Amen.

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The *profession* of a christian is no less realized than is his experience. “ *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*” * As if he had said, “ Those of you who have been conquered by grace, and have hope in Christ, as your righteousness, Lord and King, did, by baptism, testify to men, and angels, your allegiance to him. You then put on the robe of his profession, and the armour of his gospel, that as good soldiers, you might fight manfully under the banner of the captain of your salvation;--- that by your attachment to his person and government, you might distinguish yourselves from those, who are ashamed of the cross.” Such is the nature of christianity; and such the opposition of the world to it, that “ *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.*” † But the christian, vitally united to his master, is zealous in his cause, and dares to outbrave the rage of earth and hell!! And in the water of baptism, as in a mirror, he realizes to himself the persecutions and afflictions which may await him in his journey through life. Although Zebedee’s children

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were,

* Gal. iii. 27.

† 2 Tim. iii. 12.

were, at the time of their mother's request, much unacquainted with the cup, and the baptism of Christ's sufferings; yet every believer finds a measure of suffering necessarily apportioned to him. Constrained by the love of Christ, he passes through the water in testimony of his cheerfulness to undergo any affliction which may befall him; and thus confirms the triumph of the spouse,---*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it **

V. The last subject which I shall name, expressed by baptism, and necessary for the christian convert to realize, is his hope of interest in the triumphant resurrection of the just at the last day. *The wages of sin is death.* By one man's offence, the King of Terrors ascended his awful throne, and now extends his reign over all mankind.† Into the black waters of death, all must descend, as a part of the consequence of sin; and, for a man to realize this doleful scene, terror and anguish must seize his breast. But Jesus, for his people, overcame death, by atoning for sin, and thus received the sting of death into his own heart.

* Sol. Song. viii. 7.

† Rom. vi. 23. Job xviii. 14. Rom. v. 17, 18.

heart. He died; he plunged beneath the wave of death, and by entering into the dominion of the dead, he foiled the foe, and arose again as the complete deliverer of his church; for it was not possible that the bands of death and the grave should hold him within their power. Jesus is now the *Resurrection* and the *Life* of his people; and their sure pledge of conquest over death, and admission to eternal glory. All this was realized in his baptism; and, in administering the ordinance, we may address the candidates, in the angel's words to the women seeking their buried Saviour, "*Come see the place where your Lord lay.*"* Partaking the virtues of his meritorious death, we may look with triumph on the tomb. "*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*"† In the firm belief of these great truths of revelation, the Convert approaches the ordinance of baptism with profound reverence. Calm and serene he enters the stream, in pleasing anticipation, that when he comes to the solemn waters of death, he shall there be triumphant. Christ hath taken away the
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* Mat. xxviii. 6.

† Rom. vi. 5.

thing; and reduced what I may call the *penal substance* of death; so that its *shadow* alone remains for the believer to pass.* And how strikingly is this shadowy passage of death represented, by the person passing through the waters of baptism, and then rising again with a refreshing, animating glow;---instead of being compelled, as the demerit of sin, to plunge beneath the inconceivable, dreadful billows of divine wrath, never to arise again!

Having thus attempted to assist the Christian Convert, in ascertaining the signification of Baptism, he may admire the wisdom of its Divine Institutor; and with additional satisfaction go forward in the discharge of his duty. An institution, so expressive as this, can never be realized but by those who have arrived to the exercise of reason, and enjoy a measure of that *faith, without which it is impossible to please God.*† It certainly must be a high reflection upon the wisdom and grace of Christ, to suppose he should establish so glorious an ordinance, to be administered to those who possess neither a natural, nor a spiritual capacity to enjoy it. But this is not the case with you,
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* Psa. xxiii. 4.

† Heb. xi. 6.

for whose instruction this treatise is designed ; you have not only arrived at an age in which reason exercises her extensive powers, but you have obtained mercy to believe, to the saving of your soul. The sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ ; the regeneration of the heart by the influence of the Holy Spirit ; the Trinity, as the christian's covenant God ; the nature of experience, and a public profession of the gospel, and his hope of interest in the resurrection of the just in the last day : these important subjects are in some good degree perceived and enjoyed in your own soul, and by which your right to baptism is indisputable. Convinced of your duty, and feeling a glow of ardor to obey the command of Christ, and to devote yourself to his honour before saints and angels, perhaps you say, as did the converted eunuch when he came to a certain water, “ *See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?*” Not to retard your steps in following Christ ; for, as the amiable Mr. Hervey said on the obedience of Abraham, “ The Great Jehovah expects alacrity in his service. Nay, cheerfully as well as instantly must his command be fulfilled.”*

Yet,

* Theron and Aspasio, vol. iii. p. 198.

Yet, for your farther information, and meekness to obey, you will give me leave to inform you of some of those advantages which are to be derived from a believing submission to Christ in baptism.

ADVANTAGES OF BAPTISM.

IF all the commands of God, in nature, are intended to promote the interest of the rational creation, we must believe that the special institutions of his grace are designed, in a more extensive manner, to enrich those whom he hath adopted in Christ to be his children for ever. As the ordinance of baptism is so very expressive of the truth of the gospel, it certainly must be calculated to convey the most salutary benefits to those who are true candidates for it. Some of these advantages we will now recite.

I. *The answer of a good conscience towards God.** A good conscience is a precious jewel to him that hath it. It supplies the want of every thing else within; and supports the possessor.

* 1 Peter iii. 21.

feffor amidst the unforeseen calamities he may meet with from without. The poffeffion of this forms the bafis of our perfonal happinefs; the want of it is the avenue to complicate wretchednefs. That baptifm is the answer of a good confcience towards God, I may be permitted thus to explain:---

It realizes that *renewing grace* which makes the confcience good. Every man's confcience by nature is evil. It deceives itfelf---abhors the fear of the Almighty---daily increafes its own guilt, impelling the poffeffor to walk in thofe paths which end in bitterness and death. In order to the enjoyment of God, this confcience muft be enlightened; its guilt muft be pardoned, and, as Paul faid, "*purged from dead works to ferve the living God.*"* Now, as baptifm, the fign for the thing fignified, in lively colours represents the death of Chrift, and the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, by which alone a man's confcience can be purified; it is therefore called the answer of a good confcience. And is not this a valuable bleffing? That heart which will not bear the trial of Chrift, muft prove a fource of mifery to itfelf! But, bleffed is the man
who

* Heb. ix. 14.

who can say, "*He that judgeth me is the Lord.*"*

If baptism be called the *answer* of a good conscience towards God, it necessarily implies a *question* proposed. In baptism, Christ and the Convert have a solemn meeting. The Saviour, by his word, addresses the Convert in such accents as these:---"*I am the Lord that created thee, and formed thee. I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes be attentive to my ways. My grace is sufficient for thee; I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. No weapon formed against thee shall prosper. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee. Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. Even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you. Where I am, there thou shalt be also, to behold my glory; for I am THE LORD THY GOD, THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL THY SAVIOUR.*" To this address the christian may be said thus to reply:---"*Lord, why have I found grace in*
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* 1 Cor. iv. 4.

thine eyes; and why hast thou taken knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? Thou art my God, the rock of my salvation. In thy blood am I pardoned. In thy righteousness am I justified, and will glory. By thy WORD and SPIRIT do I hope daily to be sanctified: and by thy power I hope to finish my course with joy, and finally dwell with thee above. As thou Lord hast called me from sin and slavery to be a subject in thy glorious kingdom, here, at thy holy institution, I give myself to THEE, to be thine forever. Witness to my conscience that I am thine, and let me ever enjoy the sweet, reviving, healing virtues of thy blessed Spirit, which this water of baptism realizes to my mind. And, as by immersing into them I expect to arise with an animating glow upon my body, so, in the morning of the resurrection, may I arise with transport from the waves of death, meet thee in the skies, and be forever blessed in thy presence." Such an answer as this, and such a testimony, does a good conscience declare in baptism towards the God of salvation; the possession of which must create that sublime joy my pen is incompetent fully to describe.

Let me add, baptism is the answer of a good conscience towards God, as, by the christian being baptized, he discharges that important

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public duty which God, in his gospel, required of him, and which, with deep conviction, may have long impressed his mind. “ *He that knoweth his master’s will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.** And what stripes have been more severe on the conscience of many than a wilful neglect in not obeying Christ in the ordinance of baptism? It is not my present intention to enumerate the many frivolous excuses made by some for their delay of baptism; but I will confidently say, that where a man is clear in his judgment that he is a subject of grace, and would sensibly feel on being thought not so by others; and that baptism is enjoined only on those that believe; that man’s delay is sin; for, “ *to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.*”† A person living in such wilful disobedience may in vain complain that sermons, and other means of grace, are to him unprofitable; and he need not be told, that while his conscience returns not an *answer* to the commands of God, he must live in obscurity of mind, and be a prey to the tormenting accusations of his own conscience. But that
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* Luke xii. 47.

† James iv. 17.

man who has cheerfully obeyed the voice of his Lord, feels his heart relieved; and he can best tell the force of this text; “ *Baptism is the answer of a good conscience towards God.*”

II. An increasing manifestation of Jehovah’s approving, satiating smiles. God, according to his promise, meets with his saints in their obedience to his commands; and it hath been the testimony of thousands, that their joy in God was inexpressibly great when they obeyed his will in baptism. When the Saviour commissioned his disciples to go forth, teach and baptize, he animated them to pursue, by pronouncing this gracious promise; “ *Lo! I am with thee always to the end of the world.*” And this, in a very eminent degree, hath been accomplished, both to the administrator and the subject of baptism. The minister hath experienced the highest pleasure in the service of his master, and the baptized believer exulted in the dedication of himself to his adorable Redeemer. One of the many promises Jesus hath made, that his sensible presence shall attend his people in the discharge of their duty, is recorded by John:*

D 2 them,

* John xiv. 21.

them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. Precious promise! how replete with sacred consolation! to be enjoyed only by such who are found obedient to the dictates of the word of God. How insufficient, therefore, the excuse of those, who, though satisfied of their hope in Christ, hesitate to honour him in baptism, because they feel not that spiritual activity which formerly they enjoyed! Let such learn so to keep the commands of Christ as to discharge them faithfully, and to believe that thereby the promise shall be accomplished to them; and they then will assuredly enjoy that delightful frame of soul, the want of which they now so much regret. As the ETERNAL FATHER, by voice from heaven, attested the *Sonship* of Jesus immediately on his coming out of the water of baptism; so, in a proportionate degree, God grants his people the testimony of the spirit of Adoption in the same ordinance; and by which they are more firmly persuaded of their interest in everlasting love, and with joy embrace Jehovah as their everlasting Father in Christ Jesus. In addition to this sensibility, the obedient christian, in
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this institution, beholds, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord Jesus; the greatness of his sufferings, the horrors of his death, and the triumphs of his resurrection. In the exercise of faith he now triumphs in Christ as his Saviour and his King. "If Jesus is mine; if the virtue of his cross is mine; if the fullness of his grace is mine, I need no more; my heart is satisfied, and at rest. In him will I triumph in prospect of death and judgment; and from him I hope to receive a never-fading crown of bliss." Thus the baptized believer, like the eunuch of Ethiopia, *goes on his way rejoicing.*

III. The baptism of the HOLY GHOST was a blessing which primitive believers enjoyed upon their obedience to God in water baptism. John the Baptist foretold that the SON OF GOD *should baptize with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.* And although Jesus frequently discoursed with his disciples on the office of the Spirit, and encouraged them *to wait for the promise of the Father*, yet none received this spiritual baptism until Christ ascended and was glorified. On the day of pentecost this gift was bestowed upon many in a most astonishing manner; their souls were

filled with the Holy Ghost; their lips became conversant with languages they knew not before; and power was given them to perform miracles in the holy name of Jesus. The same miraculous baptism was conferred in successive periods in the apostolic age, by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, but is now ceased; unless we conclude the *gifts* of the ministry, to understand and unfold the mystery of the gospel, to be a *degree* thereof. It however appears, that even in the primitive age, the baptism of the Holy Ghost was not always given for miraculous operations. *The disciples at Antioch were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.* The Ephesians, *after that they believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.* And the three thousand converts were by Peter assured, that after their baptism *they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* In neither of these instances does it appear that the subjects were baptized with the *fiery*, or *miraculous* gifts of the Spirit; but in a soul-satiating manner, by which their knowledge, hope, love and experience were increased, and they enabled to advance in the christian life with zeal. If the primitive saints stood in need of this spiritual baptism,

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I am sure we do likewise; for we are subject to the same fears, temptations and afflictions, and need adequate support and consolation. And although it be not my province to say what baptized persons may, or may not have enjoyed the baptismal visitation of the blessed Spirit, yet, as I find it a privilege in the gospel equally free for all who believe and are baptized, and that *God hath promised his Spirit to them that ask him*, I am bound, while writing this treatise on baptism, to encourage the christian convert to be found in the discharge of his duty, wait for the promised blessing, and to leave the event with his Lord. I will only add, that as Christ was led out of the water of baptism into the fire of temptation, and that the same trying dispensation, more or less, is the portion of his saints; and as the humanity of Jesus was strengthened for the conflict by the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon him immediately after his baptism; so, the young christian, after giving himself to Christ in water baptism, in a less or greater degree enjoys the *sealing* baptism of the Holy Ghost, by which his joy is increased in the Lord, and is emboldened to meet the temptations that may await him in his future course.* IV.

* “ The practice of *laying hands* upon the bap-

IV. By a gospel obedience to God in baptism, the christian convert has an indisputable right to a union with the visible church of Christ. The three thousand who were pricked in the heart, and gladly received the word under the ministry of Peter, were immediately baptized, and *the same day added to the church.** He therefore who stands alone, and at a distance from the communion of saints, not only deprives himself of one of the greatest blessings to be enjoyed on earth, but, he casts an insult on the King of Zion; tacitly charges the church with folly; lessens the visible kingdom of Messiah, and gives men leave to question the sincerity of his personal religion. In the formation of the human soul, the wise Creator not only enriched it with powers capable of self-gratification, but he gave it a principle of sociability, in the exercise of which, the more sublime passions of our nature might be gratified. This promise of the farther communication of the Spirit, and is used as a just expression of our expectation, that he will lead believers into greater degrees of light, comfort and holiness, as well as a prayer, that this may be the happy experience of the person upon whom the hands are laid." *Dr. Joseph Jenkins.*

* Acts. ii.

might attain their highest improvement and perfection. In every sphere of life we prove, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*"* No sooner is a soul born of God, than he finds the most cordial attachment to those who are partakers of the same grace. The King of Israel said, "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*"† "*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.*"‡ This privilege of gospel fellowship God promised by Isaiah; "*One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name, better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.*"§

The privileges to be enjoyed in a church, established on the principles of the gospel, and honoured with the smiles of God, are many

* Gen. ii. 18.

† Psal. cxix. 63.

‡ Psal. xxvii. 4.

§ Isa. xliv. 5, lvi. 5.

many and precious. A union with God's spiritual family, ensuring their advice, watchfulness, gifts and prayers; the Table of the Lord Jesus, where he converses with his children by lively emblems, hears their complaints, and conveys to them assurance of his precious love; the pastoral care of the ministry of Christ, by whom instruction, comfort, and many other advantages, under God, may be enjoyed; unity in the public and private prayers and praises of Zion; to behold the goings forth of the Lord in the administration of his laws and ordinances, the gifts and experiences of his people, the conversion of sinners and the restoration of backsliders, and in the rich variety of his sacred truth; a greater enjoyment of Jehovah's promised presence, in such a social capacity, than individuals have a right to expect; a growth and habitual meetness under these means of grace, for the more perfect fruition of God with the church triumphant in glory:--- These, and many other privileges, by grace and by baptism, you are entitled to; not as a stranger, nor a visitant, but as a citizen of Zion, and a child in your Father's house.

Having thus, according to the ability God hath given

given me, attempted to instruct the Christian Convert in the nature and advantages of baptism, as a glorious ordinance, pertaining to the church of God, I presume you are convinced that the institution, in its own nature, requires a spiritual understanding, and the possession of grace, in order to acceptable obedience to God in it; and, that the great gospel truths it is designed to display, can be performed by *immersion* only. The conduct of others, who in any mode professedly baptize infants, not yet attained to the exercise of their rational powers; or of adults, who may be strangers to renewing, pardoning grace; those you leave to the judgment of God. Enough for you to know your duty and privilege, expressed by the law of your master. As it is the *being* of grace, and not the *abundance* of grace, by which a person is entitled to baptism, you may humbly presume yourself a lawful candidate for the ordinance. And although you be neither so rich in grace, nor so lively in religion, as many others, nor as you yourself wish to be, yet, you know that God hath done that for your soul which nature never could have performed. Permit me, then, to exhort you to arise and be baptized

tized in the name of that ADORABLE IMMANUEL who has thus called you by his grace. He waits to be gracious, and to bear witness that you are his, and satiate your soul with his smiles, in his own appointed ways. All the rich variety of truth, so strikingly displayed in baptism, he can realize to your mind, and make your obedience to him cheerful and delightful. Sensible of this, I presume you have no disposition to linger in the path. No,

Asham'd of Jesus! sooner far
 May midnight blush to own a star!
 Asham'd of Jesus! just as soon
 May midnight blush to think of noon.
 Asham'd of Jesus! yes, I may,
 When I've no crimes to wash away;
 No tears to wipe, no joys to crave,
 And no immortal soul to save.
 'Till then, nor is the boasting vain,
 'Till then I boast a SAVIOUR SLAIN!
 And, O may this my portion be,
 That Jesus' not asham'd of me!

As this treatise may probably be read by some who are satisfied with the baptism they may have received in their infancy, I hope they have felt no unpleasant emotion against the author, or others, whose sentiments and practice he hath recited, and endeavoured to
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confirm from the Holy Oracles. To prevent this as much as possible, I have avoided that acrimony which hath too unfortunately been indulged in a discussion of baptism. You may, however, interrogate yourself, if your baptism, in its nature and effects, corresponds with what hath now been cited from the scriptures. If you are a person who knows, by experience, the nature and efficacy of discriminating, regenerating grace, I will take the greater liberty of asking, how can you confide in a religious service, performed while you was a stranger and an enemy to God? And was not this done without your knowledge or consent? Can you produce one evidence, either from the volume of nature or revelation, that God either commanded you, or approves of it? If you can, you undoubtedly ought to be satisfied therewith. Say not it is a light thing; a non-essential appointment of Christ, on whose blood you rest for pardon, and whom you profess to love, and is of equal magnitude and excellency as the Lord's supper, which probably you hold sacred to your soul. If you can produce evidence that you enjoyed the peaceful presence of Jesus; devoted yourself to his honour, on the riches of his grace to

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your soul; and that you saw in your mode of baptism the great realities of the gospel, as is illustrious in immersion by faith, and feel the approbation of God therein as done by his appointment; then I have nothing more to urge, but leave you to that God to whom alone you are accountable. But, if you cannot, and feel a defect in your own conscience, instead of reproof, all I will now say to you is, that you have yet a most precious privilege to enjoy, and to which, as a child of grace, you are entitled. Embrace it with joy; honour your Saviour, and his smiles will attend your path. Amen!

A N
ADDRESS
ON THE
IMPROVEMENT
OF
BAPTISM,

DELIVERED TO THE CHURCH PREPARATORY TO THE

LORD'S SUPPER.

A N
ADDRESS, &c.

Brethren in the Lord,

ANTICIPATING your attendance on the Lord's Supper the ensuing Sabbath, I am induced to assist you in the improvement of your baptism, as preparatory to that solemnity.

Infants, you say, are baptized without active reason or faith; therefore they are incompetent to know the path of duty; nor can they at a future period improve baptism to real advantage. Whatever truth there may be in this assertion, the case was different with you. From the possession of grace, and the study of the New Testament, you had some knowledge of the nature, intention and advantages of baptism; therefore, my brethren, you are left without excuse if you neglect the reviewal of that solemn transaction, and make not such improvement of it as it is calculated to afford. However, there may be no duty more generally
E 3 neglected,

neglected, and less understood than this. As on such an occasion as the present, when we are withdrawn from the world to discharge many of those relative duties resulting from our union in a church state, and are looking forward to the approaching Sabbath, when we shall partake of the supper of the Lord; an attempt to assist you in the improvement of your baptism may not be unacceptable. Oh! that the adorable Immanuel may indulge us with his smiles, grant us the power of reflecting on our past life, and, anew, to advance in the path that leadeth to glory.

I. A reviewal of your baptism will necessarily bring to recollection that early experience which gave you a title to the institution. "*Call to remembrance the former days in which ye were illuminated,*"* is an apostolic injunction. The time, the place, the means by which Jesus brought us to the enjoyment of his smiles; or, if his work of grace was more gradual and less imperceptible, to bring to recollection our first experience of peace with God; this cannot fail to produce in us the most sublime joy. When we advanced to the water of baptism, we saw in it a striking emblem

* Heb. x. 32.

emblem of that sinful, dreadful state we were in by nature; and the suffering, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, by whom alone we are delivered from wrath to come. Paul reminded the church at Colosse of their having enjoyed the same privilege. “ *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*”* In that early stage of the christian life, how bright was our faith! how lively our affections! how cheerfully we followed the Lamb! Precious moments! delightful enjoyments! never, never to be forgotten! With what pleasure did we advance to the gates of Zion, saying, “ *Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.† Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord.*”‡ How satisfactory and establishing to our minds was the testimony of the saints in our favour! and how pleasing the welcome we received! “ *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standeth thou without? Come, and with us be-*
hold

* Col. ii. 12.

† Psal. lxvi. 16.

‡ Psal. cxviii. 19.

hold the beauty of the Lord in his temple; enjoy the rich feast of his grace at his table; and await his coming to receive us to glory. For he brought us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us was love." These pleasures, however, did increase in obeying the Lord in baptism. The recollection of our duty brings the scene afresh to view. Surrounding saints, an admiring world, and holy angels witnessed our surrender to Christ, who bought us with his blood. With what composure of soul did we go down into the water in the hand of the honoured Servant of the Lord! and how truly solemn the accents of his lips, when pronouncing the holy name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit; and then interred us in the liquid grave with Christ! From the testimony of a good conscience, and under the smiles of our adorable Saviour, how cheerfully did we go on our way rejoicing; took our seat among the family of God, and rejoiced in the hope of greater bliss in the Church above!

While I recite this our early experience, it may not be improbable that your breast may lament, "Oh that it were with me as in months past! But, woe is me, for I am as when they
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have gathered the summer fruit; as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first ripe fruit.”* Do you indeed, my brethren, desire the first ripe fruit of conversion, and again enjoy the same lively sensibility you had at your baptism? Go then to the table of the Lord; there you see many of the same rich blessings of grace exhibited in lively figures, which you beheld in baptism. Go to Jesus, and with David say, “ *Thy vows are upon me O God; I will render praises unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?* ”†

II. We cannot recollect the pleasures we enjoyed at our baptism, without improving that ordinance as a mean of humiliation, and to raise in our breast the most lively emotions of gratitude to God, who, amidst the many imperfections of our life, hath proved himself our unchangeable friend.

Did we not at our baptism renounce the world, and professedly embrace the Lord of Life as our only portion? Did we not, by bending

* Micah vii. 1.

† Psal. lvi. 12, 13.

bending beneath the wave, declare our death to sin; and by immersing from the liquid tomb, protest our souls should live anew to God? Yet, on a reviewal of our life, what imperfections have attended our path! Without enumerating the thousands of our offences before our baptism, let us review those only which we have committed since. How great their number! how aggravated their nature! Contrary to our most solemn vows and firmest resolutions, what wanderings of heart, unhallowed thoughts, and wilful neglects may we justly charge upon ourselves! How extremely hath our love declined! and how often has our faith yielded to the baneful powers of unbelief, decoying us into the most dreary shades! In our private walk with God, in our family, and in the church, few of us, it is to be feared, have been so faithful, holy and zealous, as to leave no room for regret. Every heart in this assembly knoweth its own bitterness; and each one of us feels within his breast an accountability to our Saviour. What a mercy is it, my brethren, that we have to do with an unchangeable God! Our Jesus, into whom we have been baptized, is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. He resteth in
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his love, and is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother; therefore it is that we have been preserved unto this period. Goodness and mercy, in rich abundance, and in close succession, have followed us all our days. How frequent the interposition of his hand, when we were surrounded with danger! and how safe the refuge we enjoyed beneath the wings of his grace, when storm and tempest beat furiously upon us, and no human aid was nigh! When empty in ourselves, he hath often led us to receive the water of life flowing from the never-failing fountain of his heart. Yes, this is the God to whom we gave ourselves in baptism; and who at first brought us from darkness to light, that we might have pardon and peace in Jesus. Oh for an heart to live to his praise! As we have been baptized into the death of Jesus, and buried with him by baptism, Oh that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we, by the same power, may daily walk in newness of life! Let us then await the approaching Sabbath, surround the table of Christ in his church, tell him all our griefs, confess our various sins, and implore his pardoning love. There let us renew our engagements

gagements with him, feed upon his bread, drink his wine, and charge our souls to live forever to his praise.

III. You may, my brethren, improve your baptism so as to confirm and endear the social band of fellowship which you enjoy with each other as a branch of Christ's visible church. "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called into one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*"* You all professed an interest in the same Christ, were received into the church as partakers of the same grace, and all drank the spirit of the gospel. "*As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many.*"† You are all loved with the same everlasting love, children of one glorious Father in Christ, and have an equal right to the laws, privileges and honours of Zion.

* Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.

† 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 14.

Zion. And how strikingly was this expressed by your own baptism, and by once dipping? As the many particles of water formed one body, into which you were baptized, so grace, in all its rich and inexpressible variety, is one. How ought this view of your baptism to unite your hearts, minds, judgments and affections in the highest possible degree! “*Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. Love as brethren; be tender hearted one towards another, putting on charity as the bond of perfectness.*” Enjoy the means of grace with a steady mind, a believing heart, and a praying soul. “*Follow after things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another.*” Be faithful to God, in maintaining the glory of his truth, and the simplicity of his institutions. Ever bow to the authority of Christ in his laws, agreeably to your professed allegiance to him at your baptism. “*Henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every*

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*joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.** Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love her. Pray that the power and sensible presence of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, into whom ye were baptized, may be highly experienced among you. Thus shall your ministry be blessed; your ordinances will yield you delight; and your numbers shall increase with men as with a flock.

IV. I will take leave to add only, that a review of your baptism will assist in the confirmation of your souls in God. He who gave you pleasure at the water of baptism, will give you support in the water of death. Though we cannot extract merit from our past duties nor experiences, yet we may use them both as arguments to encourage our souls in God. That God did, by his grace, give us a title to baptism, we dare not deny. That he met with us in the duty, and enabled us to go on our way rejoicing, are facts, the force of which can never be erased from our breasts: and it is equally true, that he now holdeth
our

* Eph. iv. 14, 15, 16.

our souls in life. He cannot, he will not forsake the work of his own hand. He will perfect that which concerneth us. The followers of the Lamb shall not miss the path that leads to the Throne of Glory. As Jesus arose, first from the water of baptism, then from the water of death, to enter the presence of his Father; so, the hope you professed in a risen Christ, in your baptism, shall not prove abortive. He lives at his Father's right hand, and ye shall live also.

Suffer me to remind you as a Church, what the Lord hath done for you, since your baptism, and your *constitution*. Attempt to review your judgments, and your mercies. What decays by death, and what increase by conversion; what afflictions by sin and error, and what preservation by the arm of Jesus, the King of Zion. If, as individuals, we have trod a diversified path; equally so has the church seen her changes. Confide in the future protection of your Lord. I presume to believe, he will not forsake the inheritance which he hath among you. The walls of Zion are ever before him; and her name is engraven upon his heart. As a *vineyard of red wine*, the Lord is your *keeper*; and hath said, *I will water it every*

*every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.** Remember, that *Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.†* With these sentiments; and filled with reverence, may you approach the Lord's Table; and God will confirm your hope unto the end. There may the glory of the Lord arise upon you, and your souls enjoy that delightful repast, that can only be exceeded by your setting down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

You now perceive, my brethren, that you may improve your baptism to spiritual advantage; and that to neglect this duty is your loss. May my present address to you be so far useful, that you may frequently reflect upon your baptism, and thereby enjoy the most pleasurable satisfaction in Christ, and with one another. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like*
unto

* Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.

† Eph. v. 26, 27.

unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Amen.*

* Luke xii. 35, 36, 37.



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